

# SEI/Aaron's: Growth-Oriented CFO Positions Company for Exit



## Objective: Find Superstar Talent for Key CFO Position

Chas Smithgall is a second-generation CEO leading SEI/Aaron's, the largest franchisee of national rent-to-own home furnishings retailer Aaron's. When his company's longtime CFO was moved to handle the Smithgall family office finance needs, Chas wanted a special candidate to fill this high-profile key position who could not only handle current needs but also help grow the business. He reached out to his network but struggled to find the superstar talent he sought, so he began looking into executive search firms. "I talked to some other business executives who had engaged search firms to understand their experience. I heard both the good and the bad. After speaking to a few search firms, I decided Bell Oaks was the right fit. What set them apart was talking with their other clients. Among other remarks, they all said they would definitely use Bell Oaks again, whereas the feedback from clients of other firms was ambivalent. The feedback was insightful, helpful, and candid."

## Process: Establish Talent Pool and Narrow to the Most Impressive

Right away, Chas saw a high commitment to meeting his unique needs. "They learned about our specific requirements, where we're going as a business and who we are culturally," he says. "Then they went out and beat the street to get a list of candidates." In short order, Matt Tovrog, a Partner at the firm, and his team identified a portfolio of candidates with the strengths, experience, and cultural fit Chas sought for the role. He was impressed with more than the qualifications of the candidates. "We needed the type of person who was likely currently employed, someone who was so good at what they do their employer was keeping them happy. Bell Oaks was able to find and pique the interest of some very impressive candidates who weren't actively in the job market, candidates we wouldn't have found on our own."

## Results: Efficient Interviews and Successful Placement

He was equally impressed by the firm's efficiency. "Bell Oaks was very good at managing the process," he reports. "They kept up with my pace and could work as fast as I could work or even faster." He was just as pleased with the results. "Another recruiter actually sent me a candidate late in the process, saying this person would be a perfect fit. I checked the candidate out and wasn't overly impressed. It helped confirm that my confidence in Bell Oaks was well-placed." He soon settled on his ideal hire, and the candidate happily accepted a well-crafted offer. 18 months after the search was completed, SEI was acquired by its parent company for an all-cash transaction of \$140 million.

"Bell Oaks is very hands-on. They were plugged in and focused on our needs to a high degree. Everything they did revolved around making sure it worked for me and my company – and it did!"



BELLOAKS  
EXECUTIVE SEARCH

info@belloaks.com  
P 678.287.2000  
F 678.287.2002  
belloaks.com